tw Security
Healthcare Security & Privacy

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By the Numbers: As of Fourth Quarter 2021

Year-End Report

The pandemic may have disrupted many things, but not cybercrime. Breaches and hacks continue to set records, and the trends are increasing. Increased training, awareness, and countermeasures are critical for enterprise safety.

Surging Statistics

Hacking impacted a record high of 81% of all individuals affected by breaches this quarter.

Together, **hacking** and **unauthorized access** were responsible for **87% of all reported events** this quarter, affecting **99.8% of all victims**, another record high.

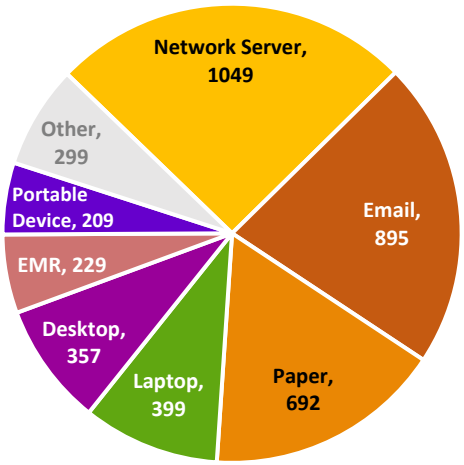
Email continues to be a major contributor to victim tallies in large breaches. Again, this quarter, email was the second largest source for data breaches that impacted over **1.3 million individuals**.

Networks Targeted

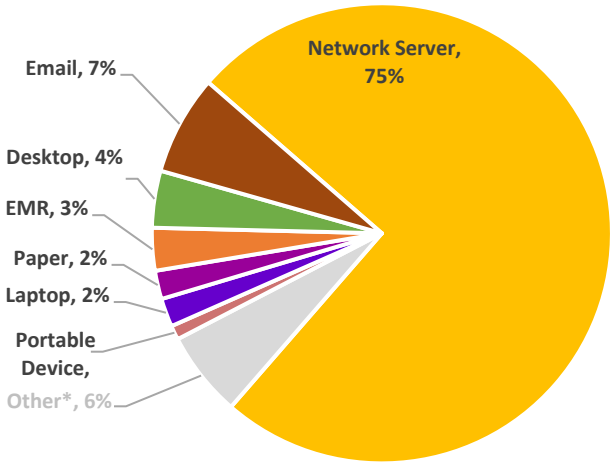
The current trend continues; network servers were the leading location of data breaches. **103 reported events** impacted **nearly 8 million** individuals this quarter.

Cumulative Breach Type and Patient Impact

Q4 '21 Breaches - Data Location



Q4 '21 Patient Impact - Data Location



Historical Trends

From 2009 to December 31, 2021, **4,129 breaches** affecting 500 or more patients were reported to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Nearly 12 million patients were affected this quarter, for a new total of **303,846,259**.

Hacking and **unauthorized access** were the most common data breach types reported, jointly responsible for **94% of all impacted patients**. Only **nine breach events** this quarter were attributed to **loss** and **theft**.

Business Associates/Business Partners reported **22%** *(903 incidents)* since reporting began, impacting **88,744,415 patients (34% of the total affected)**. Business Associates reported **24% of the breaches,** affecting **13%** of all individuals impacted. One positive development: this quarter's business associate breach events was the lowest number reported this year.

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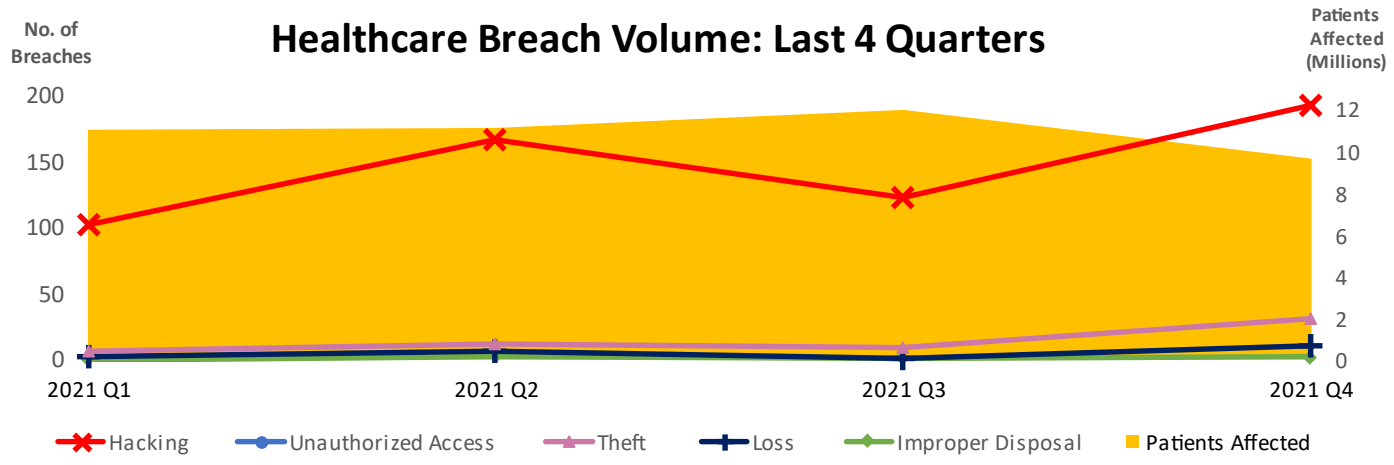

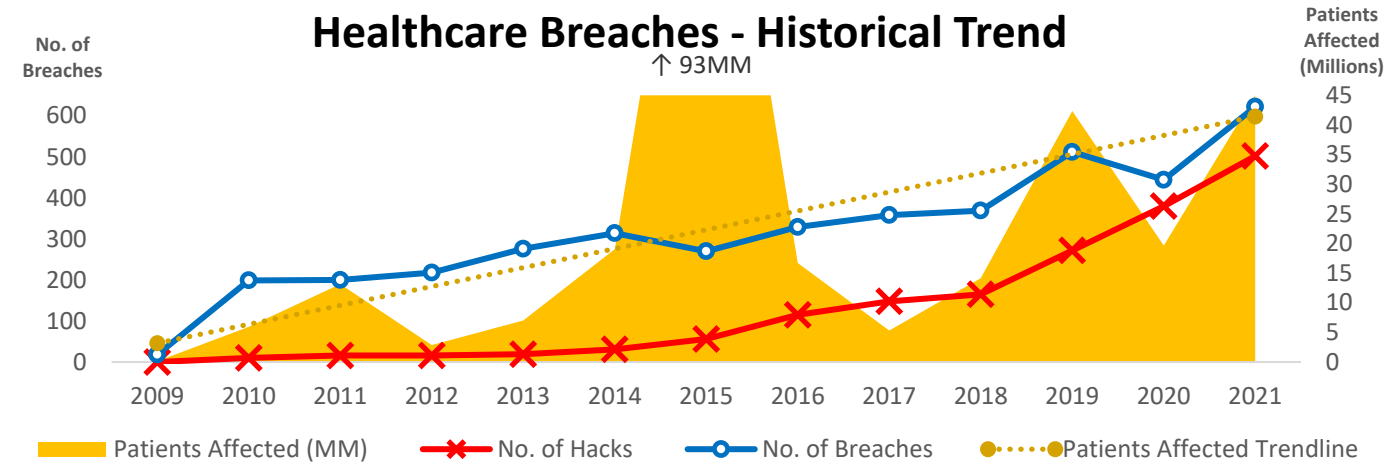

Breach Breakdown – 2009 to present:

Exploit Type	Number of Incidents	% of Total Incidents	Number of Patients	% of Patients
Hacking	**1,691**	**41%**	**245,469,665**	**81%**
Unauthorized Access	**1,057**	**26%**	18,392,455	6%
Theft	972	24%	**26,397,181**	**8%**
Loss	216	5%	8,310,148	3%
Improper Disposal	104	3%	2,113,311	1%
Other*	89	1%	3,163,499	1%

** Category discontinued in 2010*

Source: https://ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr/breach/breach_report.js

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2021 Year-End Highlights

Driven by mutations of the virus, the pandemic continues to exert tremendous pressure on healthcare. For two years now, the result has been delayed treatments, stressed workforces, and critical shortages of resources and supplies.

Information security was also heavily impacted. This year was much worse than last, as hacking events rose from 297 in 2020 to **528** in 2021. The total number of individuals impacted soared to **43 million** in 2021, more than double the 18 million reported in 2020.

For 2021 the number of large healthcare **data breaches was 622**, over a hundred more than ever reported in a single year. This year's total of individuals whose data was compromised is also the second highest on record, surpassed only by 2015's total (which was inflated by massive data breaches at two major health plans).

Considering the continuing advancement of technologies being deployed and the increases in information security staff and resources, this was not the result we expected to see.

For Business Associates, the news for2021 is not encouraging. While the fourth quarter showed much improvement, the annual tally for data breaches is only down by five reportable events, while the number of individuals impacted increased by over 6 million compared to 2020.

2022: Looking Ahead

As 2022 begins with the COVID-19 pandemic continuing and many healthcare professionals working from home at least part of the time, this is the perfect opportunity to put privacy and security strategy at the top of your priorities list.

Consider adding more security layers to protect your data. When was the last time you updated your disaster recovery plan or business continuity plan? Update your policies and refresh privacy and security training, with increased emphasis on phishing, ransomware, and hacking—that's where the cybercriminals are focused, and we need to stay one step ahead of them. When sending reminders to your workforce, use factual examples of recent breaches to make the information current, real, and urgent.

Working together, we can change the trends and have a safe new year!

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